

Romantic Age/Charles Lamb

Introduction

- 1978-Publication of Lyrical Ballads-definite shape to Romanticism
- Precursors of Romantic movement -18th Century poets(Gray, Collins)
- Romantic Revival-age of Wordsworth
- Elizabethan age-imaginative spirit-Renaissance(Spenser, Marlowe and Shakespeare)

Cause & Birth of Romanticism

- Resentment against Augustan writers(Alexander Pope, Dryden, Samuel Johnson)- style in poetry & prose-carefully chosen words
- Gradual change with Thomas Gray's Elegy-rural language-ghosts mingled with real life
- Logical views dispensed-Literal revolt in England with French Revolution in 1798-political upheaval in France-Romantic movement-William Blake's Songs of Innocence.
- 40 years transformation in Europe-cultural ,political & economic- industrial revolution.
- 1820s-existence of Romanticism-till late 20th century

Characteristics of Romanticism

- **Mystery**-Coleridge, Wordsworth and Shelley
- **Interest in the Past**- Medieval –historical-Scott, Coleridge, Keats
- **Love for Nature** -Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats
- **Interest in humanity**-interest in the lives of common men and women-humanitarian philosophy of Rousseau-ideals of French Revolution-liberty, equality and fraternity-Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron-humanists

- **Love for Simplicities of Life** –inspiration in every day simplicities of life-an ordinary sunset, a common girl, a host of daffodils, the song of a nightingale- Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats
- **Freedom of imagination**-revolt against stereotypical conventions of art-free play to imagination
- **Subjectivity and spontaneity**- gave importance to their own feelings- Wordsworth's theory of poetry
- **Speculative**-theory of poetry, poetic diction, transcendentalism, revolutionary ideas
- **Poetic style**-Used various stanza forms, ballad, blank verse, lyric, ode, sonnet-revival. Simple & natural style, musical, oratorical & picturesque styles – Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and Keats

Influences

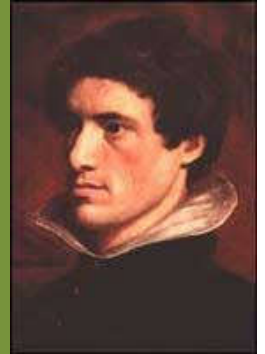
- **Old-** Aristotle, Plato, Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Medieval Romance, Elizabethan Literature
- **New Dawn** – French Revolution (1789)- New age- New human life-Liberty, equality & Fraternity
- **Golden Age** – sense of wonder, mystery, restlessness & curiosity
- **Elizabethan** Age-different forms of poetry in the Romantic revival.

Literary Background

- **Poets:** Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats and other minor poets like Robert Southey
- **Novelist:** Walter Scot, Jane Austen
- **Essayists:** Charles Lamb, William Hazlitt, Thomas De Quincy and other minor essayists.

Charles Lamb(1775-1834)

- Biography
- Born: Feb. 10 1775 in London
- 7th child to John Lamb & Elizabeth Field
- Father- Confidential clerk to Samuel Salt, Bencher the Inner Temple.
- Mother- Elizabeth Field, daughter of the housekeeper at Blakeswan in Hertfordshire, the country seat of Plumer family



Education & Career

- **Education** – care of Mr. William Bird- influence of Salt-Christ Hospital, London (1782-89)-life-long relationship with Coleridge.
- Speech infirmity-ordinary academic achievement- could not continue studies-1792 appointed as clerk-India office-Leadenhall street-33 years service-real works found in the shelves of the East India Company
- Influences- Wordsworth, Southey, Dyer & others. Reputed as a writer & critic. Tried writing Poetry, drama and Essays. Successful as Essayist.

Family Background

- John Lamb-dementia-invalid
- 1777-Mary Lamb-his insane sister-stabbed mother to death.
- She was acquitted –Lamb’s offer to care for her-did not put her in asylum-sacrificed-remained a bachelor rest of the life
- Lamb’s last years- peace & contentment-no financial strains
- 1825-retired from India House with pension. Had a fall-got hurt-died in Dec. 1834 in Edmonton

Essays of Elia

- Lamb's Essays-London Magazine-pen-name Elia.
- Pseudonym 'Elia' borrowed- Italian Clerk-South Sea House, named Elia. Did not want to identify with the name Elia- as his essays went under the name Elia- fabricated a family of Elia
- Vol. I Publication-1823-Taylor & Hessey- "Essays of Elia" – original. Last essays-published-1833.
- Lamb's essays-limited-infinite variety-autobiographical elements-relatives & friends, personal to professional, imaginary to factual, pathetic & humorous.
- Lamb-Prince of Essayists. Bacon-Father of English Essays

Variety of Theme

- **Autobiographical**
- Reveals himself-indirectly-fictitious figure Elia-his shadow-personal reflections & memories of books, character, drama of everyday life-reaction of own mind-tries to transform the character, but ends up in self-revelation
- **Eg.** The South Sea House, Christ's Hospital, Dream Children a Reverie etc.,

Humour and Pathos

- Blend of humor & pathos for the purpose of relieving him from painfulness and tedium of life
- Past experiences-fate- unable to express sorrow-uses humour to hide it
- **Eg.** Dream Children a Reverie ,The South Sea House and many more

Fact and Fiction

- Takes delight in blending a few false threads-
deliberately not to deceive readers-spoils
spontaneity of thoughts-denies having brother and
sister-false-imagines real characters in different
places.
- Personality expressed is unconscious

Style & Poetic Quality

- Romantic melancholy-sweetest songs in Prose tell of writer's saddest thoughts.
- Indefinable, inimitable-expresses from heart – digressions relieves from monotony
- Charm of poetry-not tailor made-spontaneous overflow of the feelings of Lamb's heart.
- **Eg.** Dream Children, Poor Relations etc.,